

On 'Īsā Khān, the ruler of Bhātī, in the time of Akbar.—By

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[Read December, 1903.]

In 1874 Dr. Wise published in our Journal a valuable account of the Bāra Bhūyas of Eastern Bengal, and he followed this up by a supplementary paper in 1875. J.A.S.B. XLIII, p. 197 and id. XLIV, 181. At p. 209 of his first paper there is the account of *Īsā Khān*. Dr. Wise, in his modest way, expressed the hope that his notices might excite others to add further particulars, and to complete what is still wanting of the history of Bengal to the final conquest by the Muhammadans. The object of this present paper is to add some particulars about '*Īsā Khān* from the third volume of the *Akbarnāma*, a source which has not been directly used by Dr. Wise.

It is a curious circumstance that *Abul Faḡl* in the *Āīn*, Jarrett II, 117, calls '*Īsā*, '*Īsā Afghan*,¹ for in the *Akbarnāma* III, 432, he says that his father was a Bais Rājput, that is, a Rājput belonging to Baiswāra in Oudh. (See Elliot's Supp. Glossary, ed. by Beames I, 13.) This seems to indicate that the *Āīn* was written first, and before *Abul Faḡl* had received correct information. The account in the *Akbarnāma* agrees with the family tradition mentioned by Dr. Wise that '*Īsā's* father was a Bais Rājput whose name was *Kāli Dās Gajdānī*, and that when he became a Muhammadan he received the title of *Sulaimān Khān*. *Abul Faḡl* tells us, that the father settled in the fluviatile region of Bengal and became a rebel. In the reign of *Salīm Shāh*, the the son of *Sher Shāh*, *Tāj Khān*, the elder brother of *Sulaimān Karārānī*, and *Daryā Khān* were sent against him. After severe fighting he gave in, and was pardoned. But soon afterwards he rebelled again and was, by stratagem, made a prisoner and put to death. His two sons, '*Īsā* and *Ishmael* were sold to merchants and carried off into Central Asia. When *Salīm Shāh* died (1554), *Qutbu-d-dīn Khān*, their father's brother, behaved well, and after much searching found his two

¹ So in text, but the India Office MSS. Nos. 235 and 236 have a quite different name, viz., *Mashhadī*.

nephews and brought them back to Bengal. One would like to think that this good uncle was the Qutbu-d-din who left Sher Shāh and became a recluse in disgust of the king's breach of faith towards Pūran Mal. 'Īsā was remarkable for ability and prudence and rose to be at the head of the twelve zamindars of Bengal. Abul Faḥl's language, if construed strictly, means that there were 12 zamindars exclusive of 'Īsā, but this is not Pimenta's statement. According to a tradition preserved by the Jangalbārī family he married Fātima a daughter of one Saiyid Ibrāhīm. Another tradition, Wise 202, is that he married a daughter of Cānd Rai of Bikrampūr. Abul Faḥl calls him the ruler (*marzbān*) of Bhātī and says that though he always professed to be submissive to the rulers of Bengal, *i.e.*, Sulaimān Kararānī and Dāūd, he had the good sense not to visit them. On the same page he gives the boundaries of Bhātī, and does so in a way which has puzzled Professor Dowson (Elliott VI, 73) and myself. For he talks of Bhātī being a tract which has Tānda on the south, and the ocean and the termination of the mountains of Thibet on the north! There surely must be some copyist's mistake, but all the MSS. tell the same story. A possible interpretation is that the words mean South of Tānda and North of the ocean and the terminations of the hills of Tipperah. Blochmann 342 n.I. has "from N.S., from Thibet to the ocean." Abul Faḥl goes on at pp. 433 and 438 to describe Shahbāz Khān's campaigns against 'Īsā in 1584. At pp. 433 he says that Shahbāz took the two forts which had been erected on each side of the Ganges at Khizrpūr "as this was the thoroughfare to and from Bhātī." Then he took Sonārgāon, and the populous city of Karābūh which was 'Īsā's residence. After that he hastened to Bāra Sindūr, which is a great city, and obtained much booty. Then he emerged into the Brahmaputra. He was nearly catching the rebel Ma'ṣūm Kābulī, when 'Īsā came back from Cuch Bihar with a large army. The imperialists had now to act on the defensive and took up their quarters in Toke (Totak in text) which is on the bank of the Brahmaputra, and opposite Agara Sindur (Kinara Sindur in text) and built a fort there. Then Shahbāz sent for Tarsān Khān to march from Bhowāl (N. of Dacca and also known as Nāgarī) towards Khizrpūr and disconcert the enemy by attacking them on another side. Unfortunately Tarsān was rash and was cut off by Ma'ṣūm who had taken refuge in the islands, (or more probably, the peninsula, Jazīra) between the Lakhia and the Brahmaputra.

It will be seen from the above that 'Īsā's residence was at Karābūh and not at Khizrpur, and the question is where was this town. The Bib. Ind. gives the variant Katrabūh and the Lucknow ed. has also this form. The name occurs again at p. 733 in connection with

'Īsā's naval fight with Rajah Mān Singh's son Durjan Singh, in which the latter was defeated and killed. There too we have the variant *Katrabūh*. In both cases the India office M.S. No. 236 has *Kaṣrābūh* which only differs by one dot from *Katrābūh*. The India Office MS. 235 has *Katrābūh* or *Katrālūh*. The *Maasir-ul-Umra* II, 474, has *Katrāpūr*. I think then that we may take it that *Katrābūh* is the correct reading, and it is evident that this is the *Katrabo* of Dr. Wise's paper, which he describes as being still the residence of descendants of 'Īsā *Khān*. *J.A.S.B.* for 1874, p. 211. See also p. 214 where *Katrabo* in *Sarkar Bāzūhā* is mentioned in a *sanad* belonging to the *Jangalbārī* family. *Bakhtarāpur* which is mentioned by Dr. Wise as 'Īsā's residence is only given doubtfully by Mr. Blochmann, and appears to be a misreading for *Katrābūh*, the first letter *b* having been taken as part of the name, instead of as a preposition. It will be seen from Dr. Wise's paper that "*Catrabo*" is mentioned by Sebastian Manrique who was in Bengal in the first half of the 17th century, as one of the twelve provinces. Upon this Dr. Wise remarks: "*Catrabo* is *Katrabo*, now a *tappa* on the *Lakhya* opposite *Khizrpūr* and which for long was the property of the descendants of 'Īsā *Khān*." There does not appear to be any town or village of the name of *Katrābo* now in existence, and a *tappa* of course may be a pretty large area. I imagine that the *tappa* is what appears in the *Āin Jarrett* II, p. 138, as *Katārmalbāzū* and which yielded a revenue of nearly three million of *dāms* (about Rs. 75,000). In the text of the *Āin*, p. 404, we have the variant *Katābal*, and *Tiefenthaler* gives *Katārbal*. Now in *Rennel's* map of the *Meghna* to the head of the *Lakhia*, as reproduced in *Tiefenthaler* Vol. III., we have a place marked *Goraboe* N. of *Dacca* and on the right bank of the *Lakhia* or *Banār*, a little north of *Ekdallah*. May not this be *Katrābūh*? It seems evident that *Shahbāz Khān* after capturing *Sonargāon* sailed up the *Lakhia*, or marched along its banks to *Agarasindur* and *Toke* and then came out on the *Brahmaputra*, *i.e.*, what was the *Brahmaputra* then and is still so called by the natives. The *Kināra Sindur* of the text is, I have no doubt, *Agarasindur* in the *Mymensingh* district, opposite *Toke* and which in my time was another name for the *Nikli thana*. *Goraboe* is near the site of *Doordooreah* marked on *Taylor's* map in his topography of *Dacca*, and described by him at pp. 112-114. It is true that he marks *Doordooreah* as on the left bank of the *Lakhya*, but apparently the town and the fort were on opposite sides, p. 113. His words are: "At one of these localities in thana *Kapāsia*, known in the present day by the name of *Doordooreah*, and situated upon the banks of the *Banār*, about eight miles above *Akdalla*, are to be seen the remains of a fort

and opposite to it the foundations of a town, both of which it is said were built and occupied by the Booneah Rajahs.” By Booneah Dr. Taylor means the dynasty which according to him preceded the Pāl kings, and of whom there is some account in Buchanan and in Mr. Gait’s paper on the Koc kings of Kām̄rūp. J.A.S.B. for 1893, p. 281. But the word Booneah is the same as Bhūya and as the Boiones of Manrique and Du. Jarric, Wise, J.A.S.B. for 1875, p. 181, and is as applicable to the Bārah Bhūyas of the 16th century as to the mythical Buddhists. Taylor also at p. 163 speaks of ‘Īsā’s contemporary Cānd Rai as being a Booneah! At all events, Doordoorea was occupied by Muḥammadans, if not built by them, for Taylor speaks of the foundations of a *dargāh* and mosque there. Taylor’s description shows that the ruins are, or were, very extensive, and he suggests that they may really be the site of Ekdalla as the place commonly known by that name and which is further down the river, has no remains of a fort.

At p. 438 Abul Faḍl tells us how Shahbāz Khān had to retreat in the following year (1585) in disgrace from the country of Bhātī. He had encamped on the banks of the Panār, *i.e.*, the Banār, a river which, as Taylor says, unites the Brahmaputra (*i.e.*, the old Brahmaputra) and the Lakhia. Shahbāz lay there for seven months and had frequent engagements with ‘Īsā. At one time he was successful and obtained an agreement from ‘Īsā that he would allow a royal officer, *viz.*, a *darogha* to be stationed in the port of Sonārgāon, but eventually he had to break up his camp and to retreat, first to Sherpūr Murca in Bogra (on the Karatoya) and then to Tānda, with the loss of all his baggage and of many men. The causes of this disaster were the sickness of his troops, his quarrels with the officers, and the flooding of his camp. This was effected by ‘Īsā’s having the bank of the Brahmaputra cut in fifteen places. From this fact it seems evident that Shahbāz’ camp was near the head of the Banār, *i. e.*, it was near Toke well known to all travellers by water as a charmingly wooded spot near where the Banār or Sital Lakhia leaves the old Brahmaputra. It was about a year after this, namely, in 1586, that Ralph Fitch was at Sonārgaon. His remark was that “the chief king of all these countries was called Isacan, and he is the chief of all the other kings, and is a great friend to the Christians!” Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suppose that his liking for the Christians was partly the result of his bearing the name of their Lord. Fitch’s statement however is somewhat opposed to Pimenta’s remark that the conversion of Bengal was delayed by the circumstance that nine of the twelve princes were Muhammadans. At pp. 461, 479, 632, 672, 697, 711, 714, 716 and 733 of the Akbarnāma, Vol, III, there are various references to ‘Īsā Khān, and we are told more than once of

his making submission and sending presents. But he was never really subdued, and his swamps and creeks enabled him to preserve his independence as effectually as the Aravalli Hills protected Rānā Pratāp of Udaipūr. At p. 733 there is an account of 'Īsā's defeating and killing Durjan Singh the son of Rajah Mān Singh. Perhaps the story in Dr. Wise's paper, p. 213, about 'Īsā's slaying Mān Singh's son-in-law in single combat is a reminiscence of this naval battle. At p. 763 we are told of 'Īsā's death, which took place in the 44th year of Akbar's reign and in the year 1008, 1599-1600. Dr. Wise, p. 210, says that 'Īsā left two sons Musa and Diwan¹ Muḥammad Khān of whom nothing is known. But according to Abul Fazl p. 809 'Īsā had a son named Dāūd who gave Mān Singh some trouble. Dāūd apparently was in league with Kedar the ruler of Bikrampūr and Sarharpūr and who evidently is the Kedar Rai of Bikrampūr, Wise, *i.e.*, 202.

In Mr. Gait's paper, already referred to, pp. 290-91, there is a reference to wars between the "Gaur Pāshā" and the Rajah of Kūc Bihār, and we are told that Silarai was defeated (see p. 290) and taken prisoner and afterwards released on account of his curing the Gaur Pāshā's mother of a snake-bite. There we are told that the Gaur Pāshā's mother afterwards died and that Nar Narayan and Akbar combined to attack the Gaur Pāshā. Silarai invaded his kingdom on the east and Mān Singh from the west. The result was that the Gaur Pāshā was defeated and had to fly to the Faringhis. Further on Mr. Gait remarks, p. 297, that the Mussalman historians of the period make no mention of the assistance said to have been rendered by Nar Narayan in the subjugation of Dāūd Shāh. I submit that the apparent omission has been caused by Mr. Gait's assuming that the Gaur Pāshā meant was Dāūd Shāh. The Kūc Bihār records apparently do not say so, and if we substitute 'Īsā Khān for Dāūd, the difficulty disappears. It is true that 'Īsā is not called Gaur Pāshā by the Muhammadan historians, but neither is Dāūd, and the latter and his father before him lived at Tānda and not at Gaur. Gaur is an old name for a part of the Bāqirganj district, and we find the title Gauriya assumed by another pretender to the throne of Bengal. 'Īsā too might well be called Gaur Pāshā for he is said to have ruled to the confines of Kūc Bihār. The story about the snake-bite can hardly apply to Dāūd Shāh's mother Nolakhha who surrendered to Khān Jahān and was sent up to Fathpūr. Neither was Mān Singh employed in Bengal in the time of Dāūd Shāh. He was so employed in the time of 'Īsā, and at p. 733 we find it recorded that Mān Singh acted in conjunction with Lachmī Narain of Kūc Bihār and that

¹ Perhaps the Diwan Kot 4 m. above Khizrpūr and on the right bank Lakhia is a memento of this son.

he saved the latter, although in the river-combat Mān Singh's son was defeated and killed. We know also from p. 716 that 'Īsā supported the Pātkūār against Lachmī Narain, and we have in Dr. Wise's paper, p. 213, a reference to a victory obtained over the Koc Rajah. It is curious that the Kūc Bihār chronicle should speak of the Gaur Pāsha's taking refuge with the Faringhis (Mr. Gait's paper, p. 291) and that Dr. Wise should mention the tradition that 'Īsā fled to Chittagong. Dāūd Khān certainly never did this, and indeed in his time there were probably no Faringhi settlements to fly to.

POSTSCRIPT.

Katrābuh is probably identical with the Catebarry of Taylor, Topography of Dacca, p. 64, where it is stated that "Harish Candra, one of the Booneah Rajahs, resided at Catebarry near Sābar." This statement is repeated in the Statistical Account of Bengal V, 118, where the place is called "Katibārī near Sābhār. In the list of fiscal divisions in the same volume, pp. 139-141, this is entered as No. 93 Kāthorābo tappē.

I take this opportunity of suggesting that Dr. Taylor's very valuable work should be reprinted. He seems to have been the real father of statistical inquiries in Bengal.

I also take the opportunity of suggesting that the unintelligible southern boundary for the country of Bhāti given by Abul Fazl, *viz.*, "South Tānda," may be a mistake for Lānda which in the Riyāzu-s-Salāṭīn is given as one of the boundaries of Orissa. I do not however know what place is meant by the author of the Riyāz. The passage occurs at p. 15, line 10 of his work; and the full boundary is Lāndā Dalūl لاندہ دلول. Bhāti is sometimes regarded as being merely a strip of land extending along the coast of Bengal. Thus Colonel Jarrett describes it in his translation of the Āin II, 116, n. 3, as "the coast-strip of the Sunderbans from Hijli to the Meghna." But according to Abul Fazl's description it was a very large tract of country, and its breadth from N.E.S. was 300 kos or more than Bengal whose breadth from N.E.S. was only 200 kos. Apparently it included the whole of East Bengal, together with much of Sylhet. The eastern boundary of Bhāti is given by Abul Fazl as Ḥabsha, or as Jasur (the MSS. do not agree), and Professor Dowson has rendered this as Jessore, Elliot VI, 73. But Abul Fazl calls the boundary a *Wilāyat* or Country, and Jessore was not even a Sārkar in his time, but only an alternative name for a pargana. I therefore believe that the boundary meant is Jaintia which in the Āin is spelt Jesā Jarrett, II, 139. Perhaps this may help to explain Abul Fazl's impossible northern boundary, *viz.*, *yā dāryā-i-shor*

the ocean. Perhaps what he meant, or his informants meant, was *daryā-i-sūrma*, i.e., the river Soorma.

As *Īsā Khān* and his brother were sold as slaves, it may be presumed, in spite of the tradition mentioned by Dr. Wise, that their father remained a Hindu, for it seems that a Muḥammadan cannot be sold into slavery by a Muḥammadan.

